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Triennial review of the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-ninth session on the thematic evaluation of United Nations coordinating bodies

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The present report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) is submitted in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its twenty-second session (see A/37/38, para. 362) to review the implementation of its recommendations three years after taking decisions on evaluations submitted to the Committee. This triennial review determined whether the five recommendations of the Committee concerning the thematic evaluation of United Nations coordinating bodies had been implemented. The evaluation assessed the Executive Committee on Peace and Security, the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, the Senior Management Group, the Policy Committee, the United Nations Development Group of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and the CEB High-level Committee on Programmes.

All five recommendations have been implemented.

Regarding recommendation 1, that the coordinating bodies hold their meetings on a regular and predictable basis, OIOS was provided with agendas and background documents demonstrating that they do hold their meetings on a regular and predictable basis and that, between sessions, they work through other means, such as inter-agency working groups and thematic networks.

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Pursuant to recommendation 2, that the coordination bodies examine ways to achieve better follow-up to their decisions, each coordinating body has established mechanisms and systems for following up on decisions in a timely manner to ensure their implementation.

In connection with recommendation 3, that the coordinating bodies develop mechanisms to regularly and systematically measure their own performance, while formal mechanisms have not been established, the bodies have made significant progress in strengthening their capacity to measure their performance through, inter alia, annual reports, end-of-year notes to convenors and surveys.

With respect to recommendation 4, that coordination and synergy be strengthened among all the original Executive Committees, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General commented that emphasis was placed on strengthening coordination and enhancing synergy among the Executive Committees. While there is no formal mechanism for coordination between the Executive Committees on Peace and Security and Humanitarian Affairs, their secretariats noted that there was sufficient information-sharing and coordination as a result of their common membership.

Regarding recommendation 5, that the Secretary-General further enhance the work of the coordination bodies in order to improve the effectiveness of programme delivery and the organizational performance of their members, the membership of the bodies and the sequencing of agenda items have been identified as important factors. For example, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General noted that, as the convenors of the Executive Committees are all standing members of the Policy Committee, they ensured coordination and the appropriate sequencing of agenda items to ensure utmost effectiveness, where feasible.

I. Introduction

1. At its forty-ninth session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the thematic evaluation of the United Nations coordinating bodies (E/AC.51/2009/6).

2. In its evaluation, OIOS assessed the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of seven coordinating bodies, namely:

- The Executive Committee on Peace and Security
- The Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs
- The Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs
- The Senior Management Group
- The Policy Committee
- The United Nations Development Group of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)
- The CEB High-level Committee on Programmes

3. OIOS selected those bodies because of their focus on programmatic rather than management and administrative issues, as well as their cross-cutting scope. In line with its own mandate, OIOS focused on how the work of those bodies affected the United Nations Secretariat.

4. The report concluded that the bodies added value in meeting overall coordination needs in the Secretariat. They were working towards achieving greater coherence and complementarity in a complex environment characterized by a multitude of actors with sometimes overlapping mandates. While the bodies were most effective in sharing information and aligning strategies, policies and programme planning, they were far less effective in rationalizing programme delivery and in strengthening organizational performance. In addition, weaknesses in the structures and work processes of the coordinating bodies, such as unclear membership and convenor roles, inadequate work-planning and meeting procedures and insufficient follow-up on their decisions, hindered the achievement of their respective objectives. Lastly, further strengthening was required in establishing clearer roles and responsibilities for the bodies and in achieving greater coherence among them.

5. After reviewing the evaluation report and the recommendations of OIOS, the Committee for Programme and Coordination recognized the importance of the United Nations coordinating bodies and made five of its own recommendations (see A/64/16, paras. 88-97). The objective of the present triennial review is to present the status of implementation of those recommendations. It did not include an assessment of the outcomes or impact of the implementation of the recommendations.

6. The methodology for the triennial review included:

(a) A review and analysis of progress reports on the status of recommendations that are periodically monitored through the OIOS Issue Track database;

(b) An analysis of relevant information, documents and reports obtained from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the secretariats of the seven coordinating bodies that were evaluated;

(c) Interviews with programme managers, desk officers and staff of the coordinating bodies' secretariats.

7. The report incorporates comments received from the coordinating bodies during the drafting process. Final comments of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General are appended in full, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/263 (see annex). OIOS expresses its appreciation for the cooperation extended by the focal points assigned to work on the triennial review.

II. Results

8. All five recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination have been implemented. The implementation status of each of the five recommendations is set out below.

Recommendation 1: The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of CEB, should invite the United Nations coordinating bodies to hold their meetings on a regular and predictable basis.

9. All coordinating bodies hold their meetings on a regular and predictable basis according to their respective needs and issues, although the Executive Office of the Secretary-General noted that, owing to differences in their mandates and the nature of their work, it would not be practical for all coordinating bodies to have the same standard format and schedule for meetings. A sample of agendas and background documents were provided to OIOS by the coordinating bodies, which demonstrated a regular schedule of meetings for each of them. All of the coordinating bodies also had a standard working procedure of disseminating suggested draft agendas for comments prior to finalization for the meeting and ensuring inclusion of the fundamental current issues. In addition, between sessions the coordinating bodies work through other means, such as inter-agency working groups and networks on specific topics. The bodies also use online communications and other information and communication tools, such as web pages, online document storage and e-mail, to facilitate more regular and cost-effective interaction.

10. The Senior Management Group normally meets every two weeks when the Secretary-General is at Headquarters. The Group functions as a forum for the exchange of information and experiences among all the heads of departments, offices, funds and programmes of the United Nations. The Secretary-General may use the Group to raise important cross-cutting issues and provide guidance on them. The Group fosters opportunities for informal dialogue, brainstorming and discussion among the Secretary-General and his senior advisers.

11. Since the Senior Management Group is an information-sharing forum, its meetings are generally driven by external events, current activities and topics of common concern. The Secretary-General briefly introduces each agenda item and calls upon one or more members to make a brief presentation, followed by discussion. Agenda items are approved by the Chef de Cabinet, taking into account suggestions from the members, current work priorities and political and

socio-economic events. The agenda is circulated to members prior to each meeting and a meeting note afterwards.

12. The Policy Committee meets on a weekly basis when the Secretary-General is at Headquarters. The Committee has an agenda, usually with one or two items, which is updated and shared with Committee members and guests approximately every two months. Any changes to the agenda are announced as necessary. In 2011, there were 24 meetings generating decisions by the Secretary-General on 11 geographic items and 15 cross-cutting themes (with an approximate average of 5 decisions per item).

13. Meetings of the United Nations Development Group are regularly scheduled three or four times a year, normally in January, April, June and October. The schedule is available on the websites of the United Nations Development Group and the United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office, and agendas are disseminated for comment prior to meetings, along with accompanying background documents.[1]

14. CEB meets formally twice a year, in spring (in Europe) and in autumn (in New York); and conducts business through e-mail throughout the year. The committees that form the constituent pillars of CEB, namely the High-level Committee on Programmes, the High-level Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group, each meet four to six weeks prior to the CEB session to decide on the agenda. CEB disseminates draft agendas for comments and ensures that system-wide issues are included in its agendas.

15. Meetings of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs are convened twice a year (the second meeting always coinciding with the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council), with meetings of deputies scheduled in between to advance the implementation of the decisions of the principals and to prepare issues for their consideration. Meeting invitations and agendas are issued in advance, with related background documents noted under each item. The meetings, however, are only one venue through which the work of the Committee is carried out. The thematic clusters act as virtual networks on substantive issues and in the coordinated exercises related to the objectives and activities in the strategic framework and the proposed programme budget. In another example, the network of the deputies of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs (senior officials designated by the principals) is the major platform for engaging the entities in the work of the Policy Committee, with communication, including the provision of substantive inputs to relevant policy processes, the circulation of decisions and quarterly reviews on the implementation of decisions, taking place frequently.

16. The Executive Committee on Peace and Security is convened at short notice only when there are developments on the ground that warrant high-level discussions among senior United Nations officials, resulting in the meetings being strongly demand driven. For example, in 2011 the Executive Committee on Peace and Security had nine meetings focusing on the challenges of the Arab Spring, while the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs had four meetings on various humanitarian challenges, such as, on 26 May 2011, on the situation in Chad and operating in complex security environments. At the end of the meeting, members also decided that the next meeting would be on 15 July 2011 to focus on the

[1] See http://www.undg.org/?fuseaction=Calendar.

occupied Palestinian territory and the Arab uprisings. Even though the Executive Committee on Peace and Security and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs are more demand driven in their respective agendas on the current political and humanitarian challenges, each disseminates agendas and background documents for comments prior to meetings.

17. This recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 2: The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of CEB, should invite the United Nations coordination bodies to examine other ways to achieve better follow-up to their decisions, including a specified time frame with clear deadlines for their implementation, when needed.

18. The coordinating bodies have established different mechanisms and systems for following up on decisions made at various levels in a timely manner in order to ensure their implementation. Each body has its own working procedure in place for timely follow-up.

19. Detailed meeting reports are prepared by the Development Operations Coordination Office for distribution to United Nations Development Group members, regional Development Group teams and resident coordinators and United Nations country teams. The reports are also available from http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=1073.

20. The secretariat of the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs maintains a matrix to follow up on the implementation of the decisions of its principals. It also has a standing agenda item on decision follow-up. In addition, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator sends a note to the Secretary-General regarding the key decisions of the Committee alerting him to any recommendations specifically addressed to his office.

21. The secretariat Executive Committee on Peace and Security includes follow-up to decisions in its meeting notes, which it disseminates to all members. Those notes also contain a follow-up section whenever the Committee's discussion has any implications for possible action. The secretariat also follows up with respective desk officers as necessary on particular items.

22. The decisions of the meetings of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs principals and deputies are circulated as soon as possible after each meeting, often within 24 hours, with lead actors and specific deadlines identified, as appropriate. Full meeting summaries are also circulated. Both decisions and summaries are posted in the members area of the Committee's website, along with the full background documentation for each meeting. The Committee has also instituted the practice of beginning its meetings by reviewing the status of implementation of decisions taken at the previous meeting.

23. The Policy Committee's implementation of decisions is reviewed twice a year.[2] Minutes and decisions are prepared after every meeting and are circulated to members within days.

24. As the Senior Management Group is primarily a forum for informal dialogue, brainstorming and discussion between the Secretary-General and his senior

[2] For 2011, there was an implementation rate of 86 per cent.

managers on current activities, its decisions are often procedural, serving as a basis for subsequent Policy Committee meetings, and are forwarded to the relevant committees.

25. CEB has several follow-up mechanisms in place, revolving primarily around the committee system and its subsidiary machinery. The CEB secretariat noted that follow-up of decisions of its subsidiary machinery is a standing agenda item and is included in reports of the High-level Committee on Programmes, the High-level Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group. The Board endorses or pronounces itself on decisions taken and those that require further action or follow-up. The CEB secretariat monitors and ensures that the issues that have been subject to CEB decisions are included in the agenda of subsequent meetings so that the designated lead agencies can report and provide feedback.

26. This recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 3: The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of CEB, should invite the United Nations coordinating bodies to further develop mechanisms to regularly and systematically measure their own performance.

27. While the coordinating bodies have not established formal performance measurement mechanisms, they have made significant progress in strengthening how they monitor their own performance on a regular, usually annual, basis (see table below). All of the coordinating bodies indicated that their workplans formed the basis for measuring performance in terms of planned objectives and activities. The coordinating bodies have also sought feedback from both their members and other stakeholders to measure their performance.

Mechanisms employed by United Nations coordinating bodies to regularly measure their own performance

Coordinating body	*Informal feedback*	*Monitoring of decisions*	*Surveys*	*Summary notes*	*Annual reports*
Senior Management Group	•	•			
Policy Committee	•	•			
High-level Committee on Programmes	•	•		•	•
United Nations Development Group	•	•	•	•	•
Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs	•	•			
Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs	•	•		•	•
Executive Committee on Peace and Security	•	•		•	

28. The coordinating bodies provided examples of tools they used to measure their performance. The Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs has annual reports that aim to highlight the extent to which it has been able to support the Secretary-General by providing strategic advice, aligning actions for greater United Nations coherence and influencing Governments and other stakeholders to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and to protect civilians in armed conflicts. The annual reports are based on the follow-up of the Executive Committee's decisions by the respective desk officers and its secretariat, as well as on informal interviews with humanitarian coordinators and desk officers. The reports provide a summary of activities and decisions and include feedback and the rates of implementation of decisions. Finally, the secretariat of the Committee has also developed standard operating procedures to improve the preparation of meetings and their follow-up.

29. The Executive Committee on Peace and Security prepares an internal end-of-year note to the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs reviewing its activities and performance over the year. The Committee also seeks informal feedback throughout the year, after its meetings, from the Under-Secretary-General and other high-level participants and adjusts working procedures accordingly to address pressing needs, and it uses this information to measure its performance. For example, during its discussions on the several cases where support was requested but where there was no United Nations mission on the ground, the members of the Committee noted the need for a policy for special circumstances in non-mission settings. Several members (led by the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme) were engaged in drafting the policy, which was then elevated to the Policy Committee for attention and decision.

30. The Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs undertakes its performance measurement through ongoing monitoring of the implementation of its decisions on specific substantive issues and through the feedback received by its member entities through the strategic framework exercise and the proposed programme budget process. The meetings of principals also provide a venue for the review of the Committee's functions and brainstorming on its role in relation to new challenges and emerging issues. In that regard, a formal mechanism or a rigid overarching framework may not be conducive to the very substantive nature of the Committee's work. This flexible arrangement can be adjusted to suit the issues being discussed by the Committee.

31. The Policy Committee has utilized several tools to seek feedback and measure its performance. With limited human resources, there is no capacity to perform systematic, written evaluations of the functioning of the Committee. Departments and agencies are, however, encouraged and supported in conducting evaluations of the Committee from their perspective. The Department of Political Affairs conducted an evaluation of the Policy Committee in 2011, and in early 2012 the secretariat of the Committee shared the results and methodology with the other Committee members to encourage them to consider undertaking a similar evaluation. The Committee also seeks feedback through meetings with focal points from member departments and agencies every two months that include a discussion of the functioning of the Committee.

32. The Senior Management Group receives informal feedback through dialogue and brainstorming among the Secretary-General and his senior managers. As decisions are often procedural, they serve as a basis for subsequent Policy

Committee and Management Committee meetings. No formal mechanism to evaluate the functioning of the Senior Management Group exists or is envisaged. There are, however, informal interactions of the Chef de Cabinet with senior managers, and senior managers are involved in setting the agenda for meetings of the Senior Management Group through the canvassing of topics, which helps to ensure that a feedback system exists and that it provides input to ensure the exchange of ideas and information.

33. The United Nations Development Group has agreed on a set of common strategic priorities for the period 2010-2012. Its working mechanisms have been optimized and aligned in support of the strategy. The strategic priorities are operationalized through a results-based workplan that includes outputs and performance indicators. The responsibilities of the global United Nations Development Group, regional Development Group teams, United Nations country teams and the Development Operations Coordination Office are clearly defined. Performance reporting is conducted through resident coordinator annual reports, results reports of the regional teams and an annual results report of the Development Operations Coordination Office.

34. The United Nations Development Group also conducts surveys, such as the annual United Nations Development Programme survey of stakeholders, to obtain feedback on its performance.

35. CEB submits an annual overview report, which is considered by the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Economic and Social Council and is posted on the CEB website. The report, produced under the authority of the Secretary-General as Chair of the Board, details objectives and results that the Board has achieved over a 12-month period.

36. This recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 4: The Secretary-General should strengthen coordination and synergy among all the original Executive Committees, while retaining the distinct nature of the mandates of the Executive Committees on Peace and Security and Humanitarian Affairs, taking into account the specificities of their responsibilities and the nature of their work.

37. The Executive Office of the Secretary-General commented that the Secretary-General's approach to the work of all Executive Committees places emphasis on strengthening their coordination and enhancing synergy among them. The convergence in the membership of the various coordinating bodies is one critical means of facilitating more effective coordination. For example, some of the members of the Senior Management Group are convenors of the coordinating bodies; this common membership helps to prevent the duplication of agenda items. In addition, the convenors of the Executive Committees are all standing members of the Policy Committee and, as such, ensure coordination and the appropriate sequencing of agenda items.

38. With regard to the overlap between the Executive Committee on Peace and Security and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs noted in the OIOS evaluation, there is no formally established mechanism for coordination between the two Committees. The secretariats of both committees have, however, informed OIOS that the two coordination bodies have a common membership, which is

imperative given the inseparability of humanitarian issues from peace and security questions, and that, as a result of this common membership, there is sufficient information-sharing and coordination between them. This close working relationship is illustrated by a recent example in which the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and convenor of the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs asked the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and convenor of the Executive Committee on Peace and Security to hold a meeting on a country of concern when a discussion focusing on political affairs was warranted. The Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs secretariat also noted that contact was made with colleagues in the Executive Committee on Peace and Security and the United Nations Development Group when the proposed agenda was relevant to those Committees, on a case-by-case basis.

39. The Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Group also have very close working links. While there is no formal arrangement, they engage on a wide range of issues and there is a regular flow of information between them. The two bodies held joint meetings in preparation for the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals in 2010. Also in 2010, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and convenor of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs launched a new platform bringing together all members of the Committee and the United Nations Development Group, as well as other relevant organizations, for the purpose of mobilizing preparations for the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). This "Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs Plus" platform has played a major role not only in the Rio+20 preparations, but also in the follow-up to the 2010 Summit on the Millennium Development Goals and in laying the groundwork for the United Nations system task team on the post-2015 United Nations development agenda. This engagement has facilitated the coherent and coordinated delivery of intergovernmental mandates and has helped to some extent to strengthen the links between the normative and operational work of the United Nations system.

40. Other mechanisms that have been set up to enhance synergy and coordination among coordinating bodies include joint working groups and networks. For example, the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs established a working group on transition to unite the development, political, peacebuilding, peacekeeping and humanitarian actors of the broader United Nations system in order to develop policies, guidelines and methodological approaches to support countries in post-conflict transition settings. The working group has developed a range of key instruments for country teams, such as guidance notes on the development of a transition strategy and on an inter-agency framework on conflict analysis and prevention. The working group includes United Nations Development Group members and observers, as well as the Peacebuilding Support Office, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat.

41. This recommendation has been implemented.

Recommendation 5: The Secretary-General should further enhance the work of the United Nations system coordination bodies in order to improve the effectiveness of programme delivery and organizational performance of their member organizations.

42. Improving the effectiveness of programme delivery and organizational performance has long been a priority for the United Nations and the Secretary-General. In that regard, the membership of the bodies and the sequencing of agenda items have been identified as important factors in ensuring coordination and improving the effectiveness of programme delivery. For example, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General noted that the convenors of the Executive Committees are all standing members of the Policy Committee and, as such, ensure coordination and the appropriate sequencing of agenda items to ensure utmost effectiveness, where feasible (see para. 37). There is frequently a discussion in one or another of the Executive Committees prior to the submission of an item for the consideration of the Policy Committee, and, in some cases, the Executive Committees are also responsible for overseeing the follow-up of decisions emanating from the Policy Committee. The Policy Committee secretariat shares its agenda with the CEB secretariat on a regular basis.

43. Each coordinating body emphasized that its focus was continuously on adding value by improving the effectiveness of programme delivery and the performance of its member organizations. The coordinating bodies keep their effectiveness and performance under continuous review by employing the various mechanisms discussed under recommendation 3 (see paras. 27-36). They carry out performance measurement to improve their performance in terms of both the effectiveness of programme delivery and the working procedures of the coordinating bodies. For example, the Executive Committee on Peace and Security noted the need for a policy on special circumstances in non-mission settings (see para. 29). The United Nations Development Group noted several reports it used to improve its performance. For example, the individual annual resident coordinator reports and the overall synthesis report provide information on improving coordination and programme delivery.

44. This recommendation has been implemented.

III. Conclusion

45. During the past three years, the coordinating bodies have taken sufficient steps to respond to the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination. The diversity of their mandates and, in some cases, the urgency and short-term nature of the issues that they deal with, have necessitated the establishment of their own procedures, systems and mechanisms to fulfil the coordination function.

46. The implementation of recommendations 1 to 3 has resulted in more regular and predictable meetings, with agendas and background documentation being disseminated in advance of meetings, clearer and more timely follow-up on the implementation of decisions and tools to systematically measure performance and adjust working procedures accordingly. The achievement of greater coherence among the coordinating bodies, as emphasized in recommendation 4, has largely been achieved through common membership and information-sharing on issues of common interest. Lastly, the coordinating body secretariats have indicated to OIOS that the need to improve the effectiveness of programme delivery and organizational performance, as discussed in connection with recommendation 5, is always at the forefront of their work and that the continuous assessment of performance assists

them in that regard. OIOS encourages continuing coordination in this regard, with a focus on how such coordination can ultimately improve programme delivery and effectiveness rather than becoming just a routine practice for its own sake. The Executive Office of the Secretary-General noted that in keeping with the Secretary-General's five-year action agenda, including strengthening the United Nations, the Secretary-General has made a commitment to enhancing mandate implementation, as prescribed by the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

(*Signed*) Carman L. **Lapointe**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

2 April 2012

Annex

Comments from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General

In the present annex, the Office of Internal Oversight Services presents the full text of comments from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General on the triennial review of the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-ninth session on the thematic evaluation of United Nations coordinating bodies.[a]

1. In reference to your memorandum dated 9 March 2012, on the above cited draft report, I wish to confirm that the Executive Office of the Secretary-General has no further comment.

2. However, in keeping with the Secretary-General's Five Year-Action Agenda, including — inter alia — strengthening the United Nations, I would like to confirm the Secretary-General's commitment to enhancing programme delivery and organizational performance as a key enabler for effective mandate implementation, as prescribed by the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

(*Signed*) Asha-Rose **Migiro**

23 March 2012

[a] This practice was instituted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/263, following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.